



ELSAH HISTORY

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A Life of Service

The following tributes from the friends of Pat Farmer may appear to repeat the stories about her services to her community, but it is a story well worth repeating. She was one of the founding board members of Historic Elsie Foundation in 1971, and she served on the board for the first five years of the organization's existence. She gave time willingly in order to come to the board meetings and her advice was always a welcome and gentle element of realism. Pat gave a great deal of time to the annual house tours in supervising the bake sales. No matter what the needs were, Pat always gave her time freely--finding guides for the houses, working on posters, tickets, etc.

It is evident from the articles that follow that Pat Farmer was a citizen of Elsie in the fullest sense of the word. No single view of Pat's work is sufficient, so we have chosen to include a number of comments on her career. It is with a sense of gratitude that Historic Elsie Foundation dedicates this issue of the newsletter to a great lady, Pat Farmer.

Memories of Pat Farmer

by Eleanor Barnal

I guess I first met Pat Farmer at her mom's (Nettie Cronin) when Nettie lived where Bob and June Cronin live now. Later Pat and Jesse built the house next door and we became very good friends. Our children (Martha and Mike) were good friends too. Pat was teacher to many people, but I was her driving teacher. We both enjoyed the same things, so we shared recipes, crochet patterns, and baking pans, along with the finished products. She always had orders for lots of fancy cookies and she did beautiful work.

She played piano for the Methodist church when we needed someone after all our musicians had moved away. Later, December 10, 1961, she transferred from St. Michael's church in Beltsville and became a member of



Catherine E. "Pat" Farmer giving a history of the Methodist Church at its Centennial Celebration on July 28th, 1974. Pat passed away on March 29, 1983 and was a native of Elsie. (Photo: Eleanor Barnal) Many also remember with great kindness, Pat's husband, Jesse, who passed away in 1974.

the Elsie Methodist church. When our church was given an organ she learned to play it, and we miss hearing it now. She also played for the Catholic church in Grafton and the Eastern Star.

With the help of flower lovers in the community, and with her own flowers, she arranged the bouquets for church on Sundays and special occasions. Pat and her mother would buy and plant flowers around our memorials in the village park and around the church bulletin board.

She helped many children with science fairs, as a Sunday school teacher, leader of the summer Bible school, room mother, and PTA officer. Our church rummage sales required many hours of her time, sorting, sizing and pricing, along with making posters. The church used to serve dinners, have bake sales, bazaars, and she helped with all of them. She was pianist for our church choirs and Christmas programs. Everything she did required her full support. She will be greatly missed, but, most of all, she will be missed by me.

I Remember Pat Farmer by Edith and Jim Belote

Pat Farmer was the backbone of the Science Fair Projects for the Elsay elementary school. Every year she willingly helped the students, suggesting ideas. She was especially good with biology projects, birds, butterflies, wildflowers, and samples of local woods. Some of the projects were works of art, very tastefully done and would have graced a professional collection. With Pat's help you were assured a blue ribbon at the Science Fair.

Pat performed an invaluable service when she helped Dr. John Wanamaker by counting certain species of rare wildflowers in the area.

Pat was indispensable to Al Mack when he first conceived the idea of the Elsay Landing restaurant. I remember how Pat did all the baking and would keep things running smoothly, and when a customer ordered a grinder sandwich, she would phone Al Mack at home and he would come over to make it.

A major Elsay event was Pat's annual rummage sale. All proceeds went to the Elsay Methodist church. It became famous throughout the county and supplied considerable revenue to the maintenance of the Methodist church and to run the two week summer Bible school. All the village children attended Bible school, and Pat was the director and the teacher.

Pat was a terrific cook--a cook of uncommon ability. The best recipes in my recipe box are from her, including the one for Joe Froggers cookies.

I Remember Pat Farmer by Nancy Belote

Pat seemed to be a benefactress to everyone she associated with. I've hardly known anyone who found as many ways to do good. As the dozen or more kinds of

flowers she gave me last year sprout in my yard this season, I remember her saying, as she dug deep into clump after clump of her flowers to give so generously to me, "They grow better for you when you give them away." Many a yard benefited from her extensive and well-stocked flower beds. I loved her closeness to nature, and her vast knowledge of it! She once took me on a wildflower-collecting expedition and she named every plant, knew its habitat, and noticed things I'd have overlooked if I'd stared at the spot for an hour. We came to a particularly beautiful flower-strewn bank and she said, "Looking at that, can you doubt that there's a God?"

Pat Farmer

by Helen Crafton

The Methodist church is in many ways a memorial to Pat. Even during the years it looked as if it might have to close she kept teaching Sunday school, painting pews, cleaning the floors, bringing flowers for the altar and playing the piano for services, except for periods when she proudly turned that task over to one of her pupils.

Every year she taught Bible school, which was open to any child who wanted to attend. She worked evenings through the winter collecting material for lessons and projects. For the last day of Bible school she always baked a beautiful four-tiered cake which she served with strawberries and ice cream to all of the children and their parents after the program. The church rummage sale, which later became a big community project, was started by Pat to raise money for supplies for the Bible school. Later it raised money which was used for the renovation of the church. The sale was a tremendous amount of work--and always Pat was the organizer and driving force behind it.

Many village children owe their start in music to Pat. For years almost every day after school one or two girls or boys would go to her home for free piano lessons--and cookies!

There were so many other services and gestures that were typical of Pat: May baskets secretly hung on doors, Christmas cookies and shopping trips for the elderly, Mother's Day flowers for all the mothers at church, flowers planted around the veterans' memorial in the town park, birthday cakes, wedding cakes, Christmas programs and parties--and who can forget the annual trick or treat trek for all the village children, organized and carefully supervised by Pat.

She took great pride in her work at the Elsay Landing, often working extra hours. During this time she took a real estate course, played for services for two churches, and still found time for people. It's enough to make each of us ask, "What have I done for my neighbor today?"

"Pat was my Friend"

by June Cronin

"Pat was my friend." That simple statement has been made by many people, and it was true. She was a friend in every sense of the word. Pat was always ready to lend a hand wherever there was a need. She always had just the right color thread for a hem, a book on almost any subject for a young student's essay or term paper, that missing ingredient for a birthday cake or a special casserole. She always had time to give advice and encouragement on restoring an old time-worn piece of furniture. After talking with Pat about a project and hearing her enthusiasm and optimism, one always left with complete confidence in its success. She was my sister-in-law, but, most of all, Pat was my friend.

Pat Farmer

by Jean Rowling

I met Pat Farmer for the first time at St. Patrick's church in Grafton. We had been without an organist for some time and suddenly one morning, "there was music." The second Sunday she played, I decided to meet this angel of mercy, and it was an instant mutual "like".

Pat was a warm, caring person, interested in others. She had some difficult times in her life, but she accepted them and built upon them. She was a very busy person when we first met, filling her time with jobs and family. As CCD coordinator at St. Patrick's, I called upon her to help me with the children's singing on special occasions. It seemed to please her to be asked, and I certainly needed her.

When Pat learned the nature of her illness, I was very impressed by her open attitude. She seemed to be comforting those around her and told us everything would work out in the best way, the best being God's way.

I knew Pat Farmer a short time, but I remember her kindness and her smile. She left a very warm spot in my life, and isn't that what life is all about--those people we meet along the way who brighten our day or lighten our load. This is how I remember Pat.



Home Grown !

by Blanche C. Darnell

Time was, around Elsay, everyone had a vegetable garden. And now, again, there are lots of patches tucked in here and there . . . Ed Keller's corn, okra and rhubarb down by the red cannas, Paul Barnes' tomatoes and squash on the alley behind the house, the Darnell plots in their back lawn, and others. But for serious output, year after year, see Nettie Cronin's vegetable garden of thirty years or more, and Miss Lucy McDow's, now cared for by niece Nancy and longtime family friend Wayne Rowling. Both gardens have supplied family and friends for many years. In this same tradition, relatively recent arrivals, the Lester Sontags, here eight years, and the Chuck Vogts, here six years, have developed large and lovely vegetable gardens which keep feeding family and friends.

Annetta M. Cronin, Pat Farmer's mother, has planted just about everything in her beds, one time or another. This year she said her cabbage was the tenderest ever, and so sweet! She had lovely broccoli too. Between the rows of swiss chard and New Zealand spinach, tomatoes and onions, flourish zinnias, red salvia, spider flower (Cleome) and surprise and daylilies, so the garden is always lovely.

Another success this year were her little long eggplant, "best you ever ate", and coming on this fall, a late, large, pear-shaped Contadina tomato she'll use for canning, sauces, and a special dish of hers, stuffed tomatoes. (She fits 12 halves in an 8 x 8 pan, fills them with rice, hamburger, green peppers, and onions (both from the garden) and bakes them like stuffed peppers. Great for noon dinner when friends or kin drop by.)

Nettie's garden is back against the creek berm, facing east, so she waits until late April or early May to start planting, except for five rows of lettuce she sows a bit earlier.

Miss Lucy always had the first lettuce in town. Her beds, backed up against the south facing rock formation of her long frame building, sheltered by the west rock wall on the side, were ideal for sowing, even as early as late January, and many a year, seedlings would survive the snows of February and be ready for leaf picking and thinning by mid-March, when the rest of Elsay was just thinking of beginning to plant.

Wayne Rowling and Nancy McDow, keeping her garden going now, have concentrated this year on tomatoes and zucchini. Wayne, retired from thirty years with the Illinois State Police, out of Grafton, says he really enjoys all the work as a hobby. So far, they have grown potatoes, onions, green beans, carrots, beets, peppers, tomatoes, and zucchini, and now on a plot down by the creek, he's put in a turnip patch as well.

Nettie Cronin poses with her garden on a hot August morning. Although she was apologetic for the dryness caused by an abnormal lack of rain this summer, her garden looked fresh and healthy. (Photo: GF)



The tomatoes this year were Burpee's Super Steaks, started by Wayne in February and planted out May 14. And they really are super sized! So big the clusters tended to fall down, fortunately after the picture taking.

They both keep the area mowed around the building and Nancy keeps family and friends supplied with the produce. This year there were 60 to 70 zucchini, she said, and she made a lot of zucchini bread, and jam. A friend gave her the zucchini jam recipe, which she says takes 6 cups peeled, coarsely ground zucchini, 5½ cups sugar, ½ cup lemon juice, 20 oz. can crushed pineapple with the juice, boiled together 15 minutes, stirred to prevent burning, then removed from heat, two 3 oz. packages apricot Jello added, stirred well, and then sealed in how jars, or with parafin, or stored in freezer or refrigerator. Makes about 5 pints of zucchini jam.

Chuck and Shirley Vogt have specialized in cantaloupes rather than squash, and in needed preparations to have a garden at all. Beginning three years ago, with the owner's permission, Chuck began reclaiming the vacant lot next door to their place. Working twenty to thirty hours a week, he used native rock to retain the slope and make paths; he pruned up the walnut tree in the middle (and hangs his tools on it). He and friends repoured the low cement wall on the south end, and built a picket fence atop it all the way around it. (The wall channels the occasional flash floods toward the creek. The fence keeps out romping dogs and children.) The ground was then well manured and thoroughly tilled so the walnut tree tanins would not prevent proper growing beneath. So far they have planted corn, beans, potatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, several kinds of peppers, broccoli (very good this year), tomatoes, and always, cantaloupe.

In addition, they put in a raised strawberry bed, an herb garden, rhubarb, and raspberries. And like Nettie's, they have interplanted flowers . . . brunnera, marigolds, coreopsis, mums, lilies, iris, cannas, a new honeysuckle hedge outside the fence, and in spring, tulips along the path, each in its wire basket to fool the rodents. Shirley says they often see chipmunks, and in the spring, garden snakes coming down from the hill, but so far, nary a rabbit.

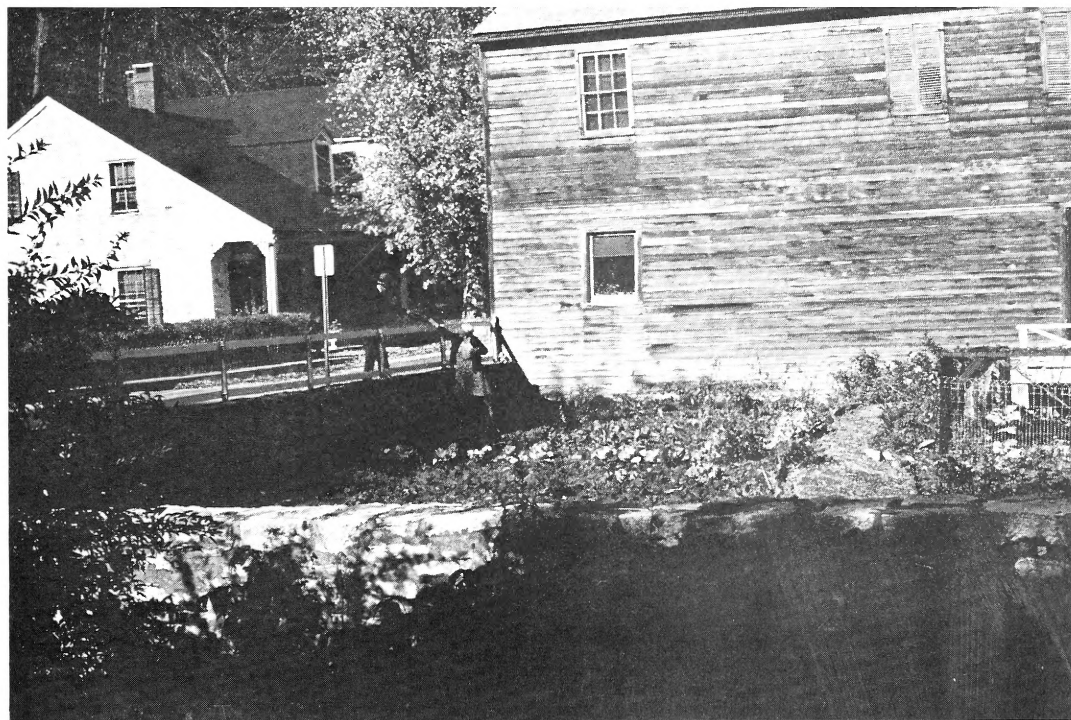
They so enjoyed the garden, they built a deck in the north corner from a dismantled old barn. Here they rest from their labors, entertain friends, or just watch village visitors go by. he shade of trees to the west shades the deck, and some of the garden too, limiting some of the crops, but none of the beauty to be seen over the fence.

Les and Patti Sontag, just across the street, have to deal with the trees around their garden, too. The shade to south and the north limits the size of the gar-



Wayne Rowling poses in his garden located where Miss Lucy McDow used to cultivate a well-watched garden for many years. Wayne holds his hand close to one of his Super Steak tomatoes to show that the hard summer did not deter their growth.

Below, the late Miss Lucy McDow shares a pepper with a passerby. (Photos: GF)



den (to 40' by 60', about the size of the Vogt and McDow plots). A locust tree in the middle is trimmed up high, and the two bin compost pile sits at the base of another locust.

The Sontag garden is between alley flood wall and creek, and so, not as visible to the passerby as the other gardens until the plants are up at harvest time. It is spread with animal fertilizers each year and rototilled several times to prepare the beds. This year they also used deep mulch of rotted hay and straw, which helped to conserve moisture in a very dry summer.

But in the eight years they have been developing the garden, heavy rains have caused the creek to rise suddenly and overrun the garden at least three times, usually in June when everything is just looking promising. Aside from that, and the trees, it is a fine garden.

Five years ago they put in some grape cuttings from friends, Concord and a green grape. And for color and insect deterrent, they plant marigolds and coreopsis.

While they have planted the usual mainstays (tomatoes, beans, cabbage, broccoli, cucumbers, lettuce, etc.), they like to try new things each year.

One year it was fava beans, this year luffa gourds (so far not too promising), leeks, and a patch of elephant garlic, slow to take hold. They've also begun an asparagus bed, and rhubarb and black raspberries are doing well.

The compost pile helps with one of their big crops, okra, which they use, freeze, and Patti pickles with dill, as well as dill green beans she makes, and



Every garden should have a compost pile. Architectural plans for this one, located in the Sontag garden, are available upon request.

Patti Sontag is pictured in the two lower photos tending to the garden. She is carrying one of her handmade straw baskets. Pictured in the background is the Elsie Emporium. (Photos: GF)



other pickles from their cucumbers. Les says, "We have planted corn but found it doesn't really produce within the limited space we can spare with all we want to try."

All of these gardeners really like to garden, but the Sontags found they enjoy it so much they bought a farm up in Calhoun County, looking towards a time when they can grow even more of their own foods.

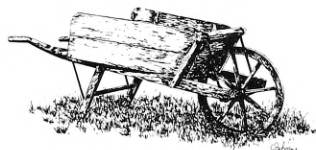
That, plus the basketmaking both of them have recently become very skilled at, should keep them well occupied. Patti uses the baskets to bring in the produce, whether vegetables, fruit, herb, or flower. And the whole Village of Elsieh enjoys the beauty of all these gardens, and often shares in the feasts they provide.



Photos hardly do justice to the extensive garden created by Chuck and Shirley Vogt on a lot adjacent to their home. The Vogts reclaimed the lot from an overgrown and weedy grass patch. (Photos: GF)



Although technically not vegetables, the grapevines in the Sontag garden add a tasty and graceful crop to the large growing area. (Photo: GF)



Eagle Scout Ceremony



by Alma Barnes

Three members of Scout Troop #9 in Elsah received their Eagle Scout awards at a special Court of Honor held in the Elsah Methodist church on May 10 at 8 p.m. Scoutmaster Robert Lowder handed out the awards. Those receiving the awards were: Evan Williams, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Williams; Durand Sintzenich, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sintzenich; and Charles Warren, son of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Warren. The church was filled with family, friends, and guests. A letter of congratulations was received by each scout from President Reagan and from ex-Congressman Paul Findley. The guests went to a reception in the Elsah Civic Center following the ceremony.



Elsah experienced three floods of nearly equal height from December 1982 to April, 1983! No sooner had we gone to press with the previous issue of the Newsletter with a feature article on the December Flood, than an early spring flood returned: Once again the result of excessive rains. The photo above, is a snapshot taken by Melissa Rockabrand during the second highwater of the spring. It features a Principia College student taking a study break while windsurfing. He is located over the entrance road to Elsah. The temperature on that day was in the 50's.)

Below, local firemen practice fire-fighting procedures on the Elsah Landing Building in March of this year. (Photo: Edie Belote)



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS:

M/M Richmond Haslam (Elsah)
 Patricia Stevens (Elsah)
 M/M John Grace (Elsah)
 Mrs. Marion Wells (Palo Alto, CA)
 M/M William Talcott (Elsah)
 Jane Martin (Elsah)
 M/M Dale Cummings (Elsah)
 M/M Robert Middlecoff (Alton)
 M/M Lee Stickler (Elsah)
 M/M James Kussman (Darien, CT)
 M/M William Winter (Alton)
 M/M Vernon Piper (St. Louis)
 Beatrice Whitelaw (Washington DC)
 James Green (Elsah)
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 Carl Yaekel (California)
 Marguerite Dork (Detroit)
 M/M E.R. Slaughter, Jr. (Dallas)
 Edgar Hansell (Des Moines, IA)
 John and Judy Williams (Herndon, VA)
 John Swett (Lombard, IL)
 M/M David Pfeifer (Elsah)

Ned and Paula Bradley have donated the proceeds of another baking session in their kitchen.



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